

Statement to be delivered by Victoria Mazee at the launch of the Stockholm +50 National Consultations

“The climate emergency - a call for action from the future generation”

H.E Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, Sr. Minister of Foreign Affairs-Republic of Liberia, Hon. Jenny Ohlsson, State Secretary, Sweden, members of the Diplomatic Corps, heads of government ministries and agencies, other distinguished platform guests, members of the press, youth and women organizations, persons living with disabilities, ladies & gentlemen.

First of all, let me thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak at this historic event marking the launch of Liberia’s Stockholm +50 National Consultations. My name is Victoria Mazee, a student at the LICOSESS Teachers college and an intern at the Kids’ Educational Engagement Project (KEEP).

Distinguished platform guests, ladies and gentlemen, as we convene here today, we are commemorating 50 years since the first United Nations Conference on the Environment was convened in Stockholm to recognize the environment as a major issue. Since then, and even in my own lifetime, the world continues to experience global events that threaten the future of my planet.

Extreme climate events have considerably increased food shortages, coastal erosion and flooding, temperatures, etc., which have affected women and children mostly. The health of important ecosystems such as the tropical forest and mangroves on which we and all other species depend is rapidly deteriorating more than ever. Our oceans and rivers are dying due to pollution from plastics and other wastes. These events are not only eroding the very foundations of our communities, livelihoods, quality of life and the economies of the world; but they are undermining the most fundamental rights of children, severely impacting their rights to health, food, water, education and protection.

Let me pause and recognize the effort of the United Nations, world leaders and all of you for the historic and ongoing efforts to make the world a better place for someone like me to excel. Kindly permit me at this time to say without apology, that I am afraid for my generation and the generations of the future. I strongly believe that apart from the communiques, declarations and signed agreements, the world has not been able to address the environment and climate emergency with the urgency it deserves. The world has seen too much of showmanship, grand standing and little action.

Distinguished platform guests, ladies and gentlemen: what is the guarantee that I can achieve my dreams and aspiration of becoming a lawyer when every year, environmental factors kill 1.7 million children under the age of five? Over half a billion children live in areas that are at significantly high risk of flooding due to extreme weather events, and

children in Liberia continue to lose their lives due to easily preventable climate-induced diseases such as malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea.

Distinguished platform guests, ladies and gentlemen: I congratulate you as you launch these national consultations here in Liberia and wish you well as you convene in the city of Stockholm later this year. I regret however that I see no certainty of a brighter future under the current conditions and trends, and I am not convinced that the next conference will make any difference for someone like me.

With all the gloom, I truly and sincerely believe that the future can be bright if you turn words into deeds. A lot has been said already; it is now time for action. We cannot afford to wait any longer when national governments continue to patronize corporations that emit greenhouse gases that pollute the atmosphere while committing to the Paris Agreement.

I want to challenge citizens and communities, youth and women, and persons with disabilities to exert pressure on governments and companies to act for the good of the environment. It is upon us to save the world or else we shall perish while the world leaders pursue wealth. We cannot continue to feel powerless in the face of these threats. These consultations allow us to raise our voices as I am doing now. If we hold our leaders and societies accountable and mount the necessary pressure, we can build better places for people and wildlife, unlock sustainable inclusive economic growth, and create a fairer, more just world that can guarantee the rights of youth, women and persons with disabilities.

Distinguished platform guests, ladies and gentlemen: I am glad to end on an optimistic note. If we confront the climate and environment emergency in the right manner at all levels - global, national, community, individual – we will succeed. If the world cannot lead, we must take leadership and lead with all the energy that is in us because our lives depend on it!

Thank you